To curb the smuggling activities through Samjhauta Express, Government have taken several steps including take over of the immigration at Attari Railway Station by the Bureau of Immigration, dispensing with the services of the coolies at the Attari Railway Station, reduction of duty free allowance of Indians and Pakistanis coming from Pakistan by land route, limiting the baggage to be carried by the passengers to facilitate 100% manual check of the baggage by the security agencies etc. These measures have proved to be effective.

Misuse of diplomatic passports

1278. PROF. A. LAKSHMISAGAR:
SHRI H.K. JAVARE GOWDA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there have been instances of misuse of the diplomatic passport issued by Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what action has been taken by Government for contravention of the rules by the erring persons?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Extradition of Plane Hijackers

1279. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have once again taken up with the Pakistan Government the issue of extradition of five hijackers and their accomplices of Indian Airlines plane from Kathmandu in December, 1999; and

(b) if so, Pakistan Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Government have, on several occasions, reminded Pakistan that as a signatory to various International Conventions against Terrorism, as also the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, Pakistan has an obligation to take into custody the hijackers of IC-814 who are believed to be in Pakistan and to extradite them to India. The matter was also raised during the Summit

level meeting between Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and President Musharraf at Agra, in July 2001.

Pakistan in its responses, usually reiterates the general position that it undertakes to apprehend and prosecute any person or persons found on its territory or the territory of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir who may be suspected of having committed such offences related to hijacking. However, they also, at the same time, reject our demarche. Pakistan's general commitment is therefore of little value.

Violence against Sikhs

1280. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in the aftermath of terrorists attacks in the U.S., violence against Sikhs has spread in U.S., Europe, Australia and New Zealand mistaking Sikhs as Arab terrorists;

(b) If so, the number of cases of such violence, reported against Sikhs in U.S., Europe, Australia and New Zealand, separately, during the month of September, 2001; and

(c) The preventive steps taken by Government?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) Some incidents of harassment including verbal abuse and violence against Indian nationals, particularly the Sikh community were reported from USA, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia. These incidents were not the result of any hostility against the Sikh community but of mistaken identity because of their outward appearance and resemblance with Arabs. The only loss of life occured in USA where one Sikh, Shri Balbir Singh Sodhi was shot dead in the City of Mesa (Arizona) on September 15, 2001. An American national, Frank Roque has been arrested and charged with murder of Shri Sodhi.

The Indian Missions/Posts in all the affected countries immediately took up this issue with the authorities at the Federal, State and local levels. During his telephonic conversation with the President of USA on 16.9.2001, Prime Minister expressed his concern about the attacks on the members of the Sikh community and was assured that the Government of USA would do its utmost to prevent such attacks.